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SUBJECT: DISAFFECTED FACTION OF MEXICO'S CONVERGENCIA PARTY
MIGRATE TO THE PRD

REF: 08 MEXICO 3670

Classified By: POLCOUNS CHARLES BARCLAY, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: A group within the small Convergencia Party decided March 1 to break ranks and affiliate themselves with the larger leftist Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD). The agreement between the Citizen Renovation Group (RECI) faction of Convergencia and the PRD was characterized as an attempt by PRD Party President Jesus Ortega to further weaken former party standard bearer Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO), who is using Convergencia and the Worker's Party (PT) to get hard-line supporters elected to the Chamber of Deputies in July's midterm elections. While the leader of the faction leaving Convergencia said that it was the result of his party's losing touch with the populace, it is more likely the result of fears within Convergencia that the organization might lose its status as a political party after what is expected to be a poor showing at the polls. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Militants of the Left-of-Center Convergencia Party, known as the Citizen Renovation Group (RECI) headed by Jose de Jesus Paredes Flores, are moving to the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) in an agreement with Jesus Ortega, President of the PRD, signed March 1. According to press reports, Paredes said that the group decided to affiliate itself with the PRD in light of Convergencia's "distance from the interests of the people" and a lack of commitment to a results-oriented platform. Ortega told media that he welcomed the move and said that potentially tens of thousands of former Convergencia members could join PRD. Ortega is rumored to be wooing members of the far-left Worker's Party (PT) to the PRD as well. The maneuver is a counter-strike by the PRD that comes after several high profile defections to Convergencia late last fall by PRD adherents.

¶3. (C) PRD insider MaryCarmen Soria told Poloff that the Ortega is working aggressively to undermine Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) who, while remaining in the opposition faction of the PRD, is leading an alliance between Convergencia and PT to get candidates who support him elected in the midterm elections in July. She said that the defecting Convergencia members are worried about lukewarm voter support for their party's candidates even with AMLO's backing, and think supporting PRD candidates is a safer bet. Soria indicated, however, that the number of those changing parties is not yet significant. According to the 2007 electoral reform, parties must get two percent of the vote on their own, irrespective of whether they are in an alliance with another party. Recent polling shows Convergencia's

support to be below that level.

¶4. (C) Comment: The move of militant Convergencia and potentially PT members to PRD, although not that significant so far, is the first concrete sign that the strategy by Convergencia and PT not to align themselves with PRD in the midterm legislative elections later this year is not paying off. AMLO and his small party supporters have yet to solidify into an alternative leftist bloc. At least some backers are looking for a berth on a safer ship. End Comment.

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